

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 MI-Access Moves Forward Over the Summer
- 2 Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators
- 3 The MI-Access Toll-free Hotline: An Invaluable Resource
- 3 District and State Winter 2004 MI-Access Results Available Online
- 4 MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Enters Pilot Phase
- 4 MI-Access Assessment Window Moves to Fall in 2005
- 5 2004/2005 Last Year for Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE
- 6 2004 Annual MI-Access Conferences
- 7 Getting Ready for Winter 2005 MI-Access and the Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot
- 7 Glossary

### Back Cover

Important MI-Access Dates  
Bookmark these Web sites



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# The Assist

*Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum*

September 2004

Volume 4, No. 1

## MI-ACCESS MOVES FORWARD OVER THE SUMMER

Dear Readers,

Welcome back! We hope you had an enjoyable summer and are refreshed and ready to tackle the challenges of the new school year.

For the past three months, the MI-Access staff has been busy. We have prepared new and improved training materials for 2004/2005. This year, the training materials will include a new section on Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE; updated information on the development of the MI-Access Functional Independence assessments (formerly referred to as Phase 2 MI-Access); revised tools for determining which state-level assessment students should take; and an updated, redesigned worksheet for IEP Teams to use when writing "as expected" for their MI-Access Participation students. To keep the hands-on training activities fresh, we also have added new case studies for determining a student's level of independence and appropriate state assessment.

The MI-Access Technical Advisory Committee—comprised of nationally-known psychometricians—met in July to (1) review MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 tryout data, and (2) discuss the next step in assessment development—the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot. This group's guidance has been invaluable in ensuring that our assessments are in keeping with standard psychometric practices.

The MI-Access Sensitivity Review Committee (SRC) and the Functional Independence Content Advisory Committee (CAC) met in July as well. During three days of meetings, they painstakingly reviewed every item administered in the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Item Tryout, examined the data showing how students performed on each item, and made recommendations regarding which items should be kept as is, modified, or dropped. Thank you to the SRC and CACs for a job well done.

Now we are turning our attention to the upcoming Fall MI-Access Coordinator Conferences. We hope to see many of you there and hear about your experiences since last fall. Remember to sign up early—last year the registration filled up at our Lansing conference to the disappointment of many. We have added one additional conference to the schedule to help accommodate needs, but it is still important to register in advance.

Again, welcome back to school. We look forward to working with you throughout the year and thank you for your continuing support.

Sincerely,

Peggy Dutcher  
Coordinator, Assessment for  
Students with Disabilities Program  
dutcherp@mi.gov



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## **2003/2004 State Board of Education Strategic Goal**

Attain substantial and meaningful  
improvement in academic achieve-  
ment for all students/children  
with primary emphasis on high  
priority schools and students.

Revised at the October 23,  
2003 Board Meeting.

## **NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS**

The 2004/2005 MI-Access assess-  
ment season has officially begun!  
To keep things moving along, BETA/  
TASA, the MI-Access contractor,  
needs to apprise you of some impor-  
tant dates, requests, and resources.

### **District Coordinator Designations**

It is time to verify and update your  
District and School MI-Access  
Coordinator information. Between  
August 9th and September 17th,  
District MI-Access Coordinators  
need to access the MI-Access Online  
System to check their current infor-  
mation for accuracy. BETA/TASA will  
send e-mail messages and letters to  
remind district coordinators of the  
schedule and the information need-  
ed. It is essential that this information  
is current so materials and informa-  
tion related to assessing students  
with disabilities at the state level  
can be provided to the appropriate  
people.

### **Changing District MI-Access Coordinators**

If you will no longer be serving as  
the District MI-Access Coordinator,  
please enter the new coordinator's  
contact information into the online  
system and pass your district's  
link and password on to the new  
coordinator. In order to maintain  
the security of a district's password,  
this link and password will not be  
provided to a new coordinator over  
the phone.

If you are the new District MI-Access  
Coordinator and have not received  
the link and password that are  
required to access the online system,  
contact the previous coordinator and  
have them send an e-mail mes-  
sage to [mi-access@tasa.com](mailto:mi-access@tasa.com), con-  
taining your name, phone number,  
and e-mail address. If this is not  
possible, call the MI-Access Hotline  
(1-888-382-4246) for instructions.  
Then, after verifying that you are the  
new District MI-Access Coordinator,  
BETA/TASA will send a return mes-  
sage to you containing the district's  
link and password for the MI-Access

Online System. (You may want to  
bookmark the link and password  
for future reference.) The return  
e-mail message will also include  
instructions on how to replace the  
old District MI-Access Coordinator  
contact information with new infor-  
mation, as well as details on how  
to update or change information on  
School MI-Access Coordinators.

### **2004/2005 Training Materials Requests**

This year, BETA/TASA will again use  
the MI-Access Online System to col-  
lect information from districts regard-  
ing their training needs. The system  
was activated on August 9th and will  
be available for requests through  
September 17th. District MI-Access  
Coordinators need to indicate how  
many sets of training materials they  
require for training purposes. Keep  
in mind that everyone involved in  
MI-Access should receive new train-  
ing materials each year since the  
Michigan Department of Education  
(MDE) is continually updating and  
improving them.

### **Teacher and Student Counts for Winter 2005 MI-Access**

In September, District MI-Access  
Coordinators will receive an e-  
mail message from BETA/TASA  
asking them to submit projected  
teacher and student counts for MI-  
Access Participation, Supported  
Independence, and Interim Phase  
2 BRIGANCE. These projections  
should be submitted using the MI-  
Access Online System. If you are a  
District MI-Access Coordinator, keep  
an eye out for that correspondence.

### **Teacher and Student Counts for the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot**

Now that the MI-Access Functional  
Independence 2.1 (formerly Phase  
2.1) Item Tryout is complete, it is time  
to move on to the next critical step in  
assessment development—the MI-

*continued on page 3*

# The MI-Access Toll-free Hotline: An Invaluable Resource

The MI-Access Toll-free Hotline at (1-888-382-4246) is a critical part of the MI-Access program. When people have questions about ordering, receiving, packaging, and returning assessment materials, the Hotline is where they go for answers.

On the other end of the line is Carol Morrison, the Hotline specialist. Every day she answers questions from MI-Access Coordinators across the state. She also assists them with making changes in the MI-Access Online System—an important tool for keeping contact information up to date. If you are a District MI-Access Coordinator and are having problems accessing or using the



Carol Morrison  
MI-Access Hotline Specialist

online system, give Carol a call and she will guide you through the process.

The MI-Access Toll-free Hotline is available from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) Monday through Friday. If Carol does not answer, simply

leave a voice-mail message, and she will return your call promptly. You may also send her an e-mail message at [mi-access@tasa.com](mailto:mi-access@tasa.com).

Finally, remember that the Hotline is a service provided by the MDE and the contractor primarily for District MI-Access Coordinators. If you are a School MI-Access Coordinator or an assessment administrator, please take your questions to your

District MI-Access Coordinator and he or she will contact Carol for assistance. (If you do not know who your District MI-Access Coordinator is, go to **[www.mi.gov/mi-access](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access)**, scroll down to "Resources," and click on "MI-Access Coordinator List.")

This quote from a MI-Access Toll-free Hotline user illustrates just how important Carol's role is in the successful administration of MI-Access.

*"I was thrown into MI-Access, so as a first-time user, I knew absolutely nothing about it. When I felt like crying, Carol made me laugh. I can't wait to meet her face-to-face at the fall conference. Thanks!"*

Carolyn Shaw  
Avondale School District

## NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

*continued from page 2*

Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot. Your participation in this pilot is required. You should submit your projected teacher and student counts for the pilot at the same time you submit your counts for MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE.

### Pre-ID Process for Winter 2005 Scan Sheets

BETA/TASA is now in the process of finalizing the Pre-ID process for Winter 2005 MI-Access student scan documents. For this process to be effective, districts must correctly identify which MI-Access assessment (Participation, Supported Independence, or Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE) each student will take. More information on the Pre-ID process will be sent to District MI-Access Coordinators as soon as it is finalized by the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability.

## District and State Winter 2004 MI-Access Results Available Online

Now you can go to the MI-Access Information Center (**[www.mi-access.info](http://www.mi-access.info)**) to obtain Winter 2004 district and state summary reports. These reports show how students performed on MI-Access Participation, MI-Access Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE. (Keep in mind that summary reports are provided only when ten or more students in the same grade participate in the same assessment.)

Summary reports for MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence are organized by assessment, grade, and performance expectation, and contain results for the past three years. These reports—which provide an executive overview of student performance—can be used to (1) examine trends, (2) compare grades, and (3) highlight areas across districts and the

state where students perform well or need more instruction.

Summary reports for Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE include only 2004 results (since that is the only year in which the assessment has been administered), and cover all grades assessed and both content areas (English language arts and mathematics) in the same document. These reports can be used to (1) compare content areas, (2) compare grades, and (3) determine overall whether the assessments chosen for students were appropriate.

To access district and state summary reports, go to the MI-Access Information Center (**[www.mi-access.info](http://www.mi-access.info)**), scroll down to "Winter 2004 MI-Access Results," and click on either district or state results.

## MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Enters Pilot Phase

In July, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) convened its Functional Independence Content Advisory Committees and its Sensitivity Review Committee to (1) examine the results of the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Item Tryout (formerly referred to as the MI-Access Phase 2.1 Item Tryout), (2) review the tryout items with the data in mind, and (3) make recommendations regarding which items should be kept as is, modified, or dropped.

In August, the MDE and BETA/TASA reviewed the committees' recommendations and began incorporating the remaining items into Functional Independence 2.1 Item Pilot assessment booklets in the content areas of English language arts and mathematics (for grades 3 through 8 and 11).

The booklets will be administered to students this winter during the Winter 2005 MEAP and MI-Access assessment window (January 24th through March 31st).

"Piloting" assessment items is a critical step in the assessment development process, because it (1) allows the items to be further refined before statewide administration, (2) provides important feedback on how students respond to items, (3) provides feedback on the assessment administration process, (4) allows the MDE to review and revise assessment materials, (5) allows for the production of professional development materials, and (6) shows the types of information educators can gain from the assessment to help inform curriculum and instruction.

### Assessment Development Checklist

- ☐ Develop assessment plan
- ☐ Field review of assessment plan
- ☐ Draft assessment items
- ☐ Committee review of assessment items
- ☐ Item tryouts
- ☐ Committee review of try-out results and feedback
- ☐ Pilot testing of assessment
- ☐ Committee review of pilot results and feedback
- ☐ Statewide implementation of Functional Independence 2.1 MI-Access

## MI-Access Assessment Window Moves to Fall in 2005

After talking extensively with teachers, principals, parents, business leaders, and education association executives, the Michigan State Board of Education (SBE) voted in June to move the elementary and middle school Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) assessments from winter to fall.

To be consistent, the MI-Access assessment window for elementary and middle school students will be moved as well so that all students in those grades can be assessed at the same time. The change will take effect in the 2005/2006 school year (a year from now) and will assess students on Grade Level Content Expectations from the previous year.

continue to be administered in the spring, so will grade 11 MI-Access assessments. That change will take effect in spring 2006.

The grades at which science and social studies are assessed are still under consideration. The Department's current recommendation is to assess science in grades 5 and 8 and to assess social studies in grades 6 and 9. Educators were asked to comment on this plan by the end of August. The SBE is expected to act on the plan at its September meeting.

While scheduled to coordinate with the MEAP, the MI-Access assessment window will continue to be longer to allow for the unique nature of the MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments and the need for some one-on-one administration of Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE. The exact assessment dates have not yet been determined, but updates will follow in future issues of *The Assist*.

### IDEAS TIPS SUGGESTIONS

If you have ideas, suggestions, or tips you would like to see included in *The Assist*, send them to [mi-access@tasa.com](mailto:mi-access@tasa.com).

According to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the change was made, in part, to provide teachers with assessment data earlier in the school year so that they could be used in a more timely fashion to inform instruction. The move also will help the state (1) develop Education YES! School Report Cards earlier in the year, and (2) prepare data to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reporting requirements.

The SBE vote affects only mathematics and English language arts assessments in grades 3-8—the grades and content areas directly impacted by NCLB. Since grade 11 assessments for the MEAP will

## 2004/2005 Last Year for Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE

Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments were administered for the first time statewide in 2003/2004. The assessments are targeted at students whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams have determined that the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), MI-Access Participation, and MI-Access Supported Independence are inappropriate for them. IEP Teams make that decision using the state's *Draft Guidelines for Determining State Assessment for Students with Disabilities*. (The draft guidelines can be found at [www.mi.gov/mi-access](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access).)

The assessments are considered “interim” because they will be used only until Michigan’s own assessments for that student population are developed. If everything goes according to plan, the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 assessments (formerly referred to as MI-Access Phase 2.1 assessments) will be available for statewide administration in 2005/2006. Therefore, this is the last year the interim assessments will be needed.

An online learning program on how to administer Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE

is available at the MI-Access Information Center ([www.mi-access.info](http://www.mi-access.info)). The program contains ten narrated modules with pictures and graphics that cover everything from how the assessments are designed to how to fill out and return assessment materials.

The use of discrete modules means that MI-Access coordinators, assessment administrators, and others can view them any time—day or night—and work at their own pace. Specific modules can also be revisited as often as necessary.

All together, the modules contain information on

- what MI-Access is,
- why the BRIGANCE® was chosen,
- what materials you will receive,
- how the assessments are designed,
- the question formats that are used, and
- where to go for additional information.

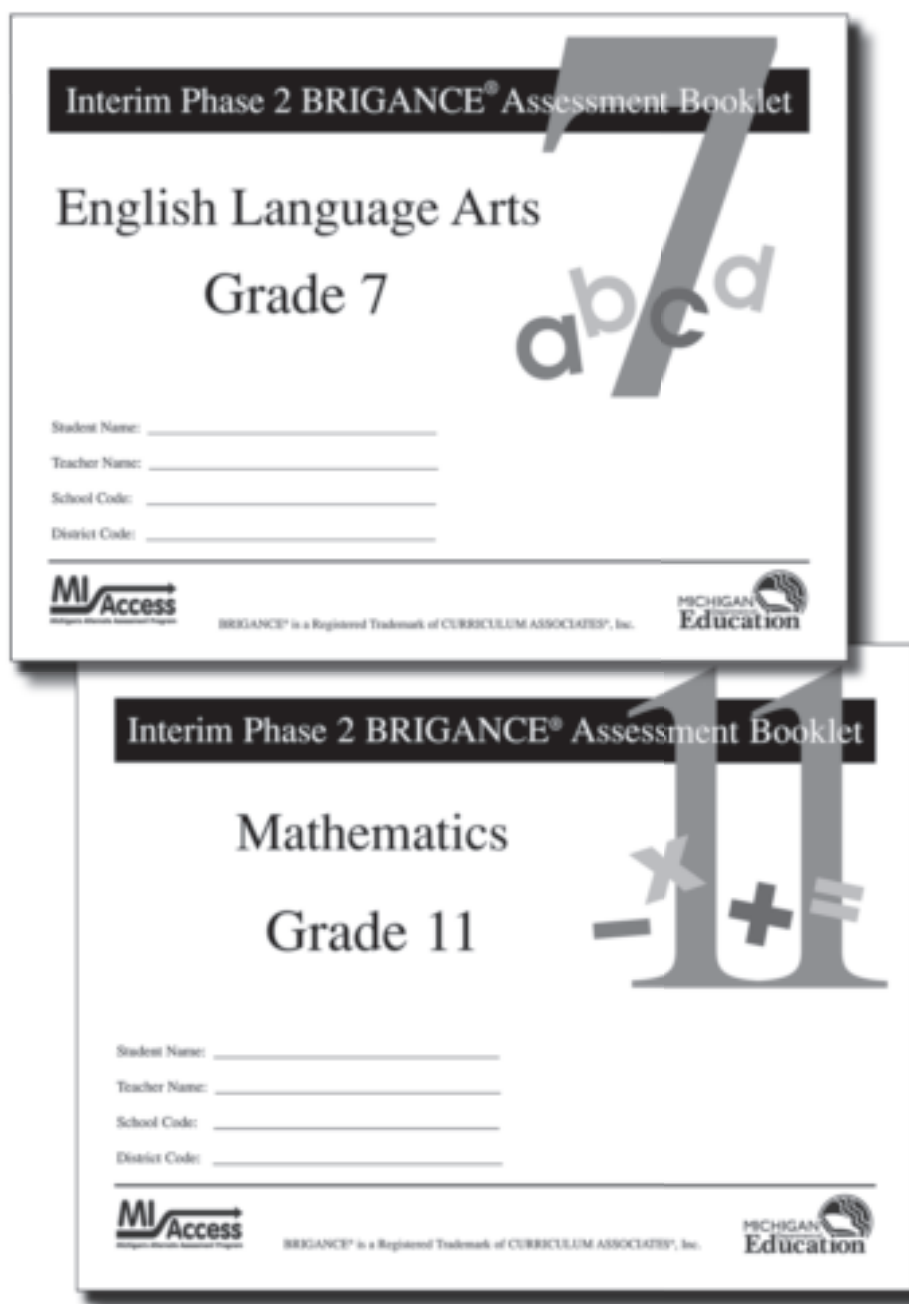
They also explain how to

- prepare for assessment administration,
- record answers,
- assess students with visual impairment, and
- return materials.

If you are a District or School MI-Access Coordinator responsible for training others on how to administer MI-Access assessments, you may want to review the modules and think about how you can incorporate them into your training sessions. (There is a new section on Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE in the 2004/2005 *MI-Access Training Materials* that can be used as well.) If you are administering Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE to your students, you may want to review the online learning program on your own to prepare for winter administration.

Starting this fall, State Board of Education Continuing Education Units (SB-CEU) can be earned by completing the training modules. Local and intermediate school districts may also choose to award professional development credits for completing the program.

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# 2004 Annual MI-Access Conferences

The Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability would like to thank everyone in the field who completed its survey regarding the topics they would like to see addressed at the 2004/2005 fall conferences. The feedback was invaluable in planning the conferences. Following is a brief description of what will be covered during the MI-Access sessions.

## Opening Session

This is your chance to hear from Peggy Dutcher, Coordinator of the Assessment for Students with Disabilities Program. She will brief participants on everything from whose scores count in AYP calculations (often referred to as the "1 percent issue") to state results, Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE online learning opportunities, and Extended Grade Level Content expectations. If you have questions about MI-Access or want to hear what's new, be sure to attend this session.

## Morning Sessions

### Session 1: *HELP! Which Assessment Should My Student Take?*

One of the biggest challenges IEP Teams face is determining which state assessment their students should take. Now that more state-level assessments are available, the choice is even harder. In this session, you will review the new student case studies contained in the 2004/2005 MI-Access Training Materials and practice determining which state assessment is most appropriate.

### Session 2: *Lessons Learned from the Functional Independence ELA Item Tryouts*

In spring 2004, districts participated in the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 (formerly Phase 2.1) Item Tryout. During the summer, the Sensitivity and Content Advisory Committees reviewed the tryout data and the items. In this session, you will discuss the lessons learned from the item tryouts, such as whether the items were accessible for all students, if students were able to express their ideas, and whether students did better or worse than expected. Sample assessment booklets and the updated Extended Grade Level Content Expectations (EGLCEs) will be provided.

### Session 3: *Congratulations You Are a MI-Access Coordinator! Now What?*

It is an honor to be a MI-Access coordinator, but it's also hard work. Fortunately, you're not alone. In this

session, you and your colleagues from around the state will learn what it means to be a coordinator, what is expected of you, and what resources are available to help. This is a good session for new District and School MI-Access Coordinators as well as those who have held the title for some time but are still learning what it means.

(After a short break, Sessions 1, 2, and 3 will be repeated.)

## Afternoon Sessions

### Session 4: *Translating Trees into Improved Student Performance*

Okay, you've received reams of paper with thousands of numbers on them, but what does it all mean? Can these numbers really help you in your district, school, or classroom? This session will walk you through results from MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence,

and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE. Then, using examples from the field, it will show how the data can translate into improved curriculum, instruction, and student performance.

### Session 5: *Lessons Learned from the Mathematics Functional Independence Tryouts*

In spring 2004, districts participated in the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 (formerly Phase 2.1) Item Tryout. During the summer, the Sensitivity and Content Advisory Committees reviewed the tryout data and the items. In this session, you will discuss the lessons learned from the item tryouts, such as whether the items were accessible for all students, if students were able to understand mathematics concepts, and whether the students did better or worse than expected. Sample assessment booklets

*continued on page 7*

## TIME IS RUNNING OUT! REGISTER NOW!

Join your peers (District and School MEAP and MI-Access Coordinators) at one of the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability's (OEAA) fall conferences. Dates and locations for the conferences (MEAP and MI-Access) are listed below.

MI-Access Conferences	Locations	MEAP Conferences
September 20	Marquette (Northern Michigan University)	September 21
NONE	Grayling (Holiday Inn)	September 22
September 29	Lansing (Lansing Center)	NONE
NONE	Lansing (Lansing Center)	October 4
October 12	Grand Rapids (Crowne Plaza)	October 13
October 19	Sterling Heights (Sterling Inn)	October 18

You may register at [www.gomiem.org](http://www.gomiem.org).

# Getting Ready for Winter 2005 MI-Access and the Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot

In September 2004, District MI-Access Coordinators need to finalize their plans for collecting required information on students participating in Winter 2005 MI-Access. Following is an overview of the information that is required:

- Similar to last year, **an updated MI-Access Online System feature will require coordinators to enter teacher and student counts.** Projected counts for each school must be submitted for each type of MI-Access assessment: Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE in grades 4, 7, 8, and 11; and the Functional Independence 2.1 (formerly Phase 2.1) Pilot in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The projections will be used to determine how many assessment booklets, manuals, and scan documents must be printed, so timely input from all coordinators is essential.
- Also similar to last year, **a Demographic Update feature will be provided on the secure MEAP Web site.** This is a password protected system for which only District MEAP Coordinators have the password. Therefore, the District MI-Access Coordinator and the District MEAP Coordinator must work together to complete demographic updates.

- New for this year, **a Pre-ID process will be provided on the MI-Access Online System.** For each school, coordinators will be presented with a list of special education students who may be eligible for participation in one of the MI-Access assessments. Coordinators must indicate which specific assessment the student will take: Participation; Supported Independence; Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE or MEAP for English language arts; and/or Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE or MEAP for mathematics. (A spreadsheet option will also be available.)

For each student identified as taking a specific MI-Access assessment, BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor, will supply a preprinted label to be placed on the appropriate MI-Access student scan document. In addition, the information will be used to prevent MEAP answer documents from being unnecessarily printed by the MEAP contractor for such students.

Detailed instructions and a schedule for completing each of the above procedures will be provided soon. Watch your mail and e-mail for these important announcements. If you have any questions, please call the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline at 1-888-382-4246.

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## 2004 Annual MI-Access Conferences

*continued from page 6*

and the updated Extended Grade Level Content Expectations (EGLCEs) will be provided.

### **Session 6: Participation and Supported Independence Transition into Adolescence**

The MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments have been administered statewide since 2001/2002. Now that babyhood is

over, it's on to adolescence—a time of review and change. In this session, you will learn how these two assessments (for those who have, or function as if they have, severe to moderate cognitive impairment) are influencing curriculum in some parts of the state. You also will hear what the future holds as they undergo routine revisions.

*(After a short break, Sessions 4, 5, and 6 will be repeated.)*

## GLOSSARY



**MI-Access Online System:** The BETA/TASA Web site used to collect and store information for MI-Access assessment administration. The system, which is accessed using a district's individualized link and password, contains the most up-to-date e-mail and shipping addresses for District MI-Access Coordinators and School MI-Access Coordinators. The system is also used by districts to order training and assessment materials for MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE.

**Pre-ID:** The process used to produce labels with students' identifying information embedded in barcodes. The labels are produced by BETA/TASA and sent to District MI-Access Coordinators for distribution to individual schools. The labels are affixed to students' scan documents before they are returned to the contractor for scoring, thus decreasing the amount of time assessment administrators must spend "bubbling in" information.

**District MI-Access Coordinator:** The person designated by a district to manage all MI-Access activities, including receiving training and assessment materials, distributing them to School MI-Access Coordinators, and disseminating all the information from BETA/TASA and the MI-Access staff to appropriate district and school staff. Some districts opt to have their MEAP Coordinator act as their MI-Access Coordinator, while others designate responsibilities to other district staff, such as the Special Education Director or supervisors.

# The Assist

## Important MI-Access Dates

**Submit Coordinator Designations and  
Training Material Requests Online**  
August 9 – September 17

**MI-Access Conferences**  
September 20 – Marquette  
September 29 – Lansing  
October 12 – Grand Rapids  
October 19 – Sterling Heights

**Submit Estimated MI-Access Teacher/  
Student Counts to BETA/TASA**  
October 1 – October 13

**Submit Student Names for Pre-ID Printing**  
October 13 - November 15

**2005 MI-Access Assessment Window**  
February 21 – March 31, 2005



## Bookmark these web sites:

**[www.mi.gov/mi-access](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access)**

(MI-Access Web page)

**[www.mi-access.info](http://www.mi-access.info)**

(MI-Access Information Center)

**[www.mi.gov/oeaa](http://www.mi.gov/oeaa)**

(Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability)

**[www.mi.gov/meap](http://www.mi.gov/meap)**

(Michigan Educational Assessment Program)

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, SEAC, Special Education monitors, MDE staff, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. The Assist may also be downloaded from the MI-Access web page at: **[www.mi.gov/mi-access](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access)**.

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